

URGENT ACTION

TORTURED SON OF OPPOSITION FIGURE HELD INCOMMUNICADO

Anas al-Beltagy, who has been arbitrarily detained for over nine years solely due to his family links, is being held in incommunicado in the Badr Prison Complex, some 70 km east of Cairo, and is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. He has been denied any visits and other contact with his family for over six years. Since his arrest in December 2013, Egyptian authorities have subjected Anas al-Beltagy to a litany of violations including enforced disappearance and torture. Concerns for his wellbeing and physical and mental health have mounted in recent weeks amid alarming reports emerging from the Badr Prison Complex about prisoner suicides and hunger strikes in protest at their conditions.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

President Abdelfattah al-Sisi

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Al Ittihadia Palace, Cairo, Egypt
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Your Excellency,

Anas al-Beltagy, the 30-year-old son of detained prominent Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed al-Beltagy, has been arbitrarily detained for over nine years solely because of his family affiliation. Despite courts acquitting him of all charges in four separate cases and a judge's decision to provisionally release him in a fifth case, the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) ordered his detention pending investigations into a separate sixth case on similar spurious terrorism-related accusations. This well-documented pattern is referred to as "rotation" by Egyptian activists and lawyers and is intended to keep critics and opponents locked up indefinitely. Since his transfer to the Badr Prison Complex in November 2022, his detention renewal hearings have been held online, further violating his fair trial rights to meaningfully challenge the legality of his detention and adequate defence. During online hearings, defence lawyers are present in the courtroom with the judges, while the defendant is connected from a room in the prison in the presence of security officials. Lawyers frequently complain of technical problems during online hearings, including poor connectivity and their inability to adequately hear defendants.

Since his arrest, Anas al-Beltagy has been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including through prolonged solitary confinement and deliberate denial of healthcare. He has been banned from any visits, phone calls or written correspondence with his family and lawyers since 2017. Anas al-Beltagy, who was a university student when he was arrested in December 2013, has been unable to continue his studies in prison despite attempts to enrol in more than seven universities. He has been held in Badr Prison 1, about 70 km east of Cairo, since November 2022 in cruel and inhuman conditions of detention. For months, he was held in solitary confinement in a freezing cell with fluorescent lights switched on 24 hours a day, not permitted any exercise outdoors and denied any contact with other prisoners. Prison officials continue to ban his family from bringing him any food, climate-appropriate clothes, and medicine. During his detention renewal hearings, in which he sometimes appears with his hands and legs cuffed, he complained about the deterioration of his physical and mental health and psychological condition due to his detention conditions.

In light of the above, I urge you to ensure that Anas al-Beltagy is immediately and unconditionally released and all charges against him are dropped as they are brought solely because of his family links and his exercise of his human rights. Pending his release, I call on you to ensure that he is held in conditions meeting international standards for the treatment of prisoners and granted regular access to his family, lawyers and adequate healthcare.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Security forces first arrested then 20-year-old Anas al-Beltagy on 24 December 2013 during a visit with his mother to the Tora Prison Complex to see his detained father, Mohamed al-Beltagy. According to information gathered by Amnesty International, security forces surrounded and beat them, before transferring them to the Maadi prosecution where they were interrogated over accusations of assaulting prison guards. The prosecution ordered their provisional release on bail after about twenty hours of detention.

On 31 December 2013, Anas al-Beltagy was arrested from a friend's house in Nasr City neighbourhood of Cairo. He was taken to Nasr City 1 Police Station, where police officers refused to acknowledge his detention and forcibly disappeared him for nearly a month, during which he was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. Amnesty International learned from informed sources that security forces held him in a small iron cage, described as "unfit for humans". After his transfer to Abu Zaabal prison in Alexandria in early 2014, the prison administration held him in prolonged solitary confinement and forced him to sleep on the bare concrete floor. He was subsequently transferred to the Tora Prison Complex, south of Cairo, where he continued to be subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including prolonged solitary confinement. Her was transferred to the Badr Prison Complex in November 2022.

Since February 2023, concerns about cruel and inhuman detention conditions in the Badr 3 prison have increased amid leaked letters by prisoners indicating a proliferation in suicide attempts by prisoners, who have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including deliberate denial of healthcare, exposure to extreme cold, camera surveillance around the clock, and bombardment with bright lights 24 hours a day. Prisoner letters paint a frightening picture of starving detainees held in isolation, whose despair at the injustices suffered for years has led some to attempt suicide and others to go on hunger strike. Concerns were further heightened after some prisoners held in Badr 3 complained during a detention renewal hearing, held online on 13 March 2023, about being stripped naked and beaten. Since the Badr Prison Complex became operational in mid-2022, the authorities have banned family visits to all prisoners in Badr 3 and some prisoners in Badr 1, including Anas al-Beltagy. Prison officials also ban prisoners from any phone or written communication with their relatives, effectively subjecting them to incommunicado detention. Given that the detainees are cut off from the outside world, little information is known about their current situation amid concerns for their well-being and mental health and reports of prison authorities subjecting prisoners to punitive measures for complaining about their treatment including by transferring some to unknown locations and placing others in solitary confinement. Prison officials also refuse to accept deliveries of food, clothes, and other essentials to prisoners from their families, despite well-documented patterns of prison authorities failing to provide those in their custody with sufficient food, potable water, basic items for personal hygiene, adequate clothing and bedding.

Security forces have long targeted the family of Mohamed al-Beltagy, leading several to flee Egypt. Security forces killed Asma al-Beltagy, Anas al-Beltagy's sister, aged 16 at the time of her death, during their violent dispersal of the Rabaa al-Adawiya sit-in on 14 August 2013, which left some 900 dead. No security or military official has been held accountable to date, while authorities rounded up thousands of actual or suspected members and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 24 May 2023

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Anas al-Beltagy (he, his)